

President's MESSAGE



Dear fellow Rotarians,

As a once-in-a-lifetime event, the centennial affords us a unique moment in history to celebrate Rotary and publicize projects that make a difference in the community. How many times have you heard, "So just what is Rotary, anyway?" Now is the time to let your friends, co-workers, and community know what Rotary is all about, especially during this landmark year. The centennial provides a golden opportunity to promote the good work and humanitarian mission of Rotary. We must take advantage of our many public relations materials and resources to spread the word of the world's oldest service organization.

To build on the momentum of the centennial, Rotary International has developed a global public image campaign that provides

public relations tools to the more than 31,900 clubs in 166 countries. Our goal is to increase awareness and establish a better understanding of Rotary's purpose and contributions to society. I believe that a greater understanding of Rotary's mission will lay the foundation for membership growth and increase pride and enthusiasm among existing members.

Earlier this year, Rotary sent each club and district a CD-ROM that contained ready-made public service announcements (PSAs) tailored for several mediums: television, radio, print (newspaper and magazine), billboard, and Internet. I encourage Rotarians to work with the local media and use their own network of contacts to place these PSAs in as many different formats as possible. Together, we can reach a larger audience and boost our visibility in the community.

In February, the centennial generated massive publicity as Rotarians organized birthday celebrations and launched new community service projects. I welcomed local media to press conferences worldwide, and radio, television, and newspapers reported on ground breakings, ribbon cuttings, marathon races, fireworks displays, tree plantings, anniversary dinners, special awards, and other Rotary commemorative events. Rotarians were also proactive in promoting Rotary in their communities. In Australia, for example, Rotarians in Brisbane, Canberra, and Melbourne raised awareness by sponsoring a parade, billboard signs, photo exhibits, and displays at local shopping centers. In Malaysia, Rotarians used the occasion to honor a past prime minister with a dinner for 800 people and to sponsor a Rotary exhibition and souvenir magazine. And in Venezuela, the country's two districts inaugurated a medical center that will specialize in the treatment and prevention of diabetes, making it the only facility of its kind in the region. I encourage clubs to apply for Rotary's public relations award so that we can recognize outstanding efforts to generate media coverage and raise the visibility of Rotary. (Deadline is 15 May; for more information, see www.rotary.org.)

One of my favorite moments this year was throwing out the ceremonial first pitch at the "Strike Out Hunger Night" - a 20-year-tradition enjoyed by more than 200 Rotary clubs in the Philadelphia area and the Philadelphia Phillies baseball team. Participants donated thousands of canned goods and raised over \$575,000 for The Rotary Foundation. (I'll never forget looking up at the huge baseball scoreboard - and seeing one of Rotary's public service announcements projected on the screen.)

As we celebrate our second century of service, it is critical that we actively promote the wonderful work of Rotary. As 1950-51 RI President Arthur Lagueux said, "Rotary's influence on the heart of the world will be in direct proportion to the number of communities that are exposed to the Rotary ideal." Let us continue to Celebrate Rotary by sharing our ideal of service with our friends, family, and community. It's a message that will endure for centuries to come.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Glenn E. Estess Sr." in dark ink.

Glenn E. Estess Sr.
President, Rotary International

